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More Money for Israel?

They're richer than ever, and they don't need it – so why are we giving it?

American **military** aid to Israel has been **increased** yet again, which leads us to ask the inevitable question: What are we getting for our money?

Well, we're getting **this**, as well as **this**, and **this** – not to mention **this**.

The regularly quoted figure is **\$3.5 billion** per year. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt go with the figure of \$3 billion in their new book, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, averring that this is "generous, but it is hardly the whole story." This "canonical" figure, they say, "omits a substantial number of other benefits." The authors cite former congressman **Lee Hamilton** as saying that Israel is one of three countries whose aid total "substantially exceeds the popularly quoted figures." The actual figure, said Hamilton, is more than \$4.5 billion.

As **Mearsheimer** and **Walt** have pointed out, neither the practical nor the moral case for this extraordinary amount of material support is justified: our **Israel-centered** foreign policy has been a burden to us in our dealings with the other nations of the Middle East, and it is increasingly clear that U.S. and Israeli interests have diverged since the end of the Cold War. Contrary to the Lobby's **assertion** that 9/11 made their fight our fight, the **exact opposite** is the case.

Anti-Americanism in the Muslim world is a deadly danger to our national security and **a great boon** to Osama bin Laden and his many imitators around the globe. This arming of the **Israeli Sparta** is a strategic and diplomatic liability that grows with each passing year.

This post by Matt Yglesias over at *The Atlantic* makes a lot of sense, as far as it goes. An argument made by the Amen Corner is that the Israelis are performing a valuable service by refining the **technical expertise** of the military-industrial complex: they're doing the research and development that is giving America **the weapons of tomorrow**. But "this doesn't really make sense," Yglesias writes, "since defense contractors – American, Israeli, French, whatever – get *paid for their work* as is, so it's not clear why the Israeli government would need extra payment."

It's hard to differentiate between private and public industry in socialist Israel, especially when it comes to the **military-industrial complex**, where no clear line of demarcation exists. Indeed, **in the United States**, and throughout the world, such companies are virtual arms of the government, which is their primary and often only customer.

The point to be made is this: Just as America's policy of military intervention in the Middle East benefits Israel strategically, serving as an ever expanding protective shield against the hostility of its neighbors, so American subsidies in the form of **military aid** are designed to bolster the

burgeoning Israeli arms industry, so that government-supported Israeli companies can sell us new weaponry developed *on our dime*.

The system works a little differently in **Eastern Europe**, where the installation of missile defense-systems **purportedly** defending against a *very* unlikely Iranian attack is a **direct subsidy** to the *American* companies that developed it. Again, aid to the Israelis is given on unusually favorable terms, and this underscores once more the central point made by Professors **Mearsheimer and Walt**, which is that the existence of **the Lobby** – as the single most powerful influence on the conduct of American foreign policy – explains the discrepancy.

Israel is a **rich country**. They don't need this enormous outpouring of free cash to shore up their military machine, which amounts to around one-sixth of our total foreign aid outlay and about 2 percent of the Israeli gross domestic product. It is the equivalent of roughly **\$500 per year** to each and every citizen of Israel. So why this incredible amount of military aid?

After all, the Israelis are **unofficial members** of the nuclear club. They could turn Tehran into a molten puddle of glass at a moment's notice, and maybe someday they will. Which is precisely the point. Israel is one of the most warlike countries on earth, given that it has been, since its inception, perpetually at war with its neighbors. Israel's partisans claim this is no fault of the Israelis, yet that question is not only **highly debatable**, it is utterly irrelevant as far as determining what the American interest is in all this.

This **new aid package** will accelerate a process that was begun some time ago and help make Israel America's confidante and primary ally, a post once occupied by the British, ensconcing the Jewish state as the primary armaments-producer to the American empire. Israel will profit from the rise of the American empire not only monetarily, but also geopolitically.

This strengthening of the Israeli military-industrial complex fills the coffers of the War Party to overflowing and helps keep the political and economic dynamics of this uniquely binational war economy flowing and politically viable. As regards the latter, **as we have seen**, the Lobby and allied groups and individuals take a leading role in plumbing for an aggressive policy in the Middle East, pushing for policies that increase war profits. It's the economics of that famous "cycle of violence" that everyone is always talking about breaking, yet it won't be broken until the power of the **military-industrial complex** is successfully curtailed, and, with it, the decisive influence of the Lobby.

One effect of *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* will be to reopen discussion of the **Foreign Agents Registration Act** and how it's not being enforced in the case of AIPAC. As the arrest, trial, and **conviction** of Pentagon analyst **Larry Franklin** makes all too clear, Israel's top lobbying organization in the U.S. is an agent of a foreign government: the upcoming trial of top AIPAC officials **Steve Rosen** and **Keith Weissman** on charges of passing classified information gleaned from Franklin to Israeli government officials threatens to uncover what it means to really function as a foreign agent – including engaging in espionage, in addition to routine cheerleading for the Israeli government talking point of the moment.

Many people have written me – given that I have covered the implications of the AIPAC spy trial in detail but haven't published anything on the subject recently – asking whatever happened to Rosen, Weissman, and the case, and darkly implying that since the supposedly all-powerful "Jewish cabal" that (in their view) runs the world couldn't possibly allow this to come to trial, it won't ever see the light of a courtroom. Ah, not so: the trial, though delayed – through the successful legal tactics of the defense – has not been derailed. A trial date of **Jan. 14, 2008**, has been set – although this, too, is tentative, given the outcome of several pending legal maneuvers. Another reason for the successful delaying tactics by the defense: the media hasn't paid any

attention to this case, apart from a brief flurry of interest when the story first broke.

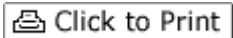
For the reasons why that is so, you'll just have to read *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. I'm just finishing it up now and hope to have a report for you soon. In the meantime, the Lobby marches on, devastating all opposition with its virulent smear campaigns, and pulling in a good chunk of change for the mother country in the process. So, what *are* we getting for our involuntary "contribution" to the IDF?

Well, nothing. But our politicians, and the corrupt corporate interests whose sock-puppets they are, are getting plenty – of that you can be sure. The former are getting reelected, thanks to huge campaign contributions by the special interests, including the armaments industry, and the latter are getting rich off the backs of the American taxpayers.

And the beat goes on...

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